

### 3. Findings of facts.

a. Task Organization. Before addressing the directed matters, it is of extreme importance to describe and clarify the task organization and command relationships (COMREL) between units executing operations at HKIA from 1–31 August 2021. The below descriptions are also enclosed in block and line charts (enclosure 8).

#### (1) 1–16 August 2021.

(a) RADM Pete Vasely, Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (Forward) (USFOR-A FWD), was the overall commander throughout the execution of operations in Afghanistan during the month of August. USFOR-A FWD was chartered as a Diplomatic Assurance Platform (DAP) and Joint Task Force (JTF) for operations in Afghanistan (exhibits 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 21). USFOR-A FWD was also Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan (SOJTF-A). Elements of the 3/10 Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) augmented USFOR-A FWD staff and security forces at the Embassy (exhibits 126, 247). The Commander of 3/10 IBCT, (TEXT REDACTED) also served as Chief of Staff for USFOR-A FWD, and commander of two ground forces, Task Force (TF) Polar Bear and TF Wild Boar, which supported the Embassy and HKIA (exhibits 21, 22, 126, 247).

(b) JTF-Crisis Response (CR), commanded by BGen Farrell Sullivan, arrived at HKIA on 20 July 2021, to prepare for a potential NEO. Beginning in May 2021, USFOR-A FWD had tactical control (TACON) of JTF-CR for planning, and then for NEO execution in August (exhibits 10, 11, 15, 18).

(c) The 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), (TEXT REDACTED) sent its Command Element (CE) and Battalion Landing Team (BLT), 1/8 Marines to HKIA on 14 August 2021 to set conditions for NEO (exhibits 15, 100, 102, 104). JTF-CR had TACON of the 24th MEU, which had TACON of 1/8 Marines (exhibits 100, 102, 104).

(d) Elements of 1/82 IBCT arrived at HKIA throughout 15–16 August 2021. JTF-CR initially had TACON of the 1/82 elements, received them at the flight line, and put them into defensive positions (exhibits 15, 100, 102, 121, 125).

(e) 2/1 Marines, the ground combat element (GCE) for the CENTCOM Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF), began arriving at HKIA in the early morning of 16 August 2021 (exhibits 53, 54, 55, 76, 77). The 24th MEU had TACON of 2/1 Marines (exhibits 10, 11, 53, 54, 76, 77, 100, 102).

(2) 17–28 August 2021. The Tactical Command Post (TAC) for the 82nd Airborne Division, commanded by MG Christopher Donahue, arrived to HKIA in the early morning hours of 19 August 2021 (exhibits 13, 21, 125). With the TAC's arrival, Gen McKenzie altered the task organization, granted USFOR-A FWD TACON of the 82nd Airborne Division, and gave the 82nd TACON of JTF-CR (exhibits 10, 11, 238). JTF-CR retained TACON of Marine forces until departure, while 82nd Airborne Division retained TACON of 1/82, and additional Army combat formations. However, USFOR-A FWD retained TACON of JTF-CR for NEO. and JTF-CR coordinated with 82nd Airborne Division (exhibits 125, 40). Marine units also executed an alternate COMREL, as 2/1 Marines reported directly to JTF-CR, despite the fact the 24th MEU had TACON of 2/1 (exhibits 18, 53, 100). 1/82 IBCT assumed TACON of TF Polar Bear and TF Wild Boar (exhibits 10, 126, 247).

#### (3) 28–30 August 2021.

(a) USFOR-A FWD departed HKIA in the early morning hours of 28 August 2021. MG Donahue, 82nd Airborne Division Commander, assumed command of all operations at HKIA until his departure at 0002 on 31 August 2021 (exhibits 131 21, 125, 246).

(b) JTF-CR and all Marine forces departed by the morning of 30 August 2021 (exhibits 15, 18). No Marine forces subordinate to JTF-CR were task organized under the 82nd Airborne Division during the last two days of the NEO.

#### (4) Adjacent Forces.

(a) Taliban. On 16 August 2021, RADM Vasely began to coordinate with Taliban forces for additional crowd control and security of HKIA (exhibits 13, 20, 21, 23). USFOR-A FWD's primary point of contact for coordination was local Taliban Commander, (TEXT REDACTED) (exhibits 13, 20, 21, 23). U.S. commanders and leaders at all echelons coordinated with Taliban forces to clarify security tasks and responsibilities (exhibits 53, 76).

(b) Turkish Military Forces. Turkish Forces were present on HKIA prior to the NEO and responsible for security of northern HKIA and working through Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) to secure the remaining perimeter (exhibits 15, 18). JTF-CR, and later USFOR-A FWD, coordinated with the Turkish Military Forces for security tasks and evacuation efforts (exhibits 15, 18).

(c) United Kingdom Forces. The U.K. had a large force presence, led by (TEXT REDACTED) on HKIA and at the adjoining Barron Hotel (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21, 126). This force consisted of three companies from 2nd Battalion, Parachute Regiment (2 PARA) and two companies from 3 PARA, for a combined force of approximately 550 troops, (TEXT REDACTED) (exhibit 126). Commanders and leaders at all levels worked with the U.K. Forces at Abbey Gate, coordinating their security and evacuation efforts (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21, 53, 56, 65, 76, 77).

(d) Afghan National Strike Unit (NSU). This organization was affiliated with U.S. interagency activities and integrated into the security of HKIA on 16–17 August 2021 (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21). USFOR-A FWD worked through U.S. Embassy Kabul (USEK) personnel to coordinate with NSU (exhibits 18, 21).

b. Actions before, during, and after the attack.

#### (1) Key Findings.

(a) By 25 August, Abbey Gate was the Main Effort for Gate Operations at HKIA.

(b) At approximately 1736 local time, 26 August 2021, a single explosion occurred at Abbey Gate.

(c) There was no complex attack; it was a single suicide bomber not accompanied by enemy small arms fire.

(d) How the bomber bypassed Taliban checkpoints to get to the canal is unknown. There were multiple avenues of approach to the canal continuously used by Afghans to bypass Taliban checkpoints. The bomber likely used one of these avenues. No Marines at Abbey Gate recall any civilian using U.S. identification to get closer to their position at the time of the attack.

(e) The attack at Abbey Gate killed between 160–170 civilians. There is no evidence the Marines' response to the attack caused further harm to civilians or fratricide. A potential civilian casualty was reported during interviews with 2/1 Marines. A Platoon Commander reported the casualty occurred during initial gate operations on 20 August and the injury, or possible death, was caused by a flash-bang grenade.

#### (2) USFOR-A FWD

(a) USFOR-A FWD was task organized to fill the command and staff billets of SOJTF-A specifically NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan (NSOCC-A) (exhibits 20, 21). CENTCOM, after consulting with outgoing USFOR-A Commander, GEN Miller, established USFOR-A FWD as a DAP prior to its deployment to Af-

ghanistan (exhibits 20, 21). The DAP's mission was to provide indications and warnings (I&W) for USEK, coordinate military activities in Afghanistan (security cooperation, targeting), and be prepared to command and control NEO (exhibits 20, 21). USFOR-A FWD developed a trigger matrix for preparation and execution of NEO, and shared it with USEK staff (exhibits 20, 21, 22). USFOR-A FWD used the trigger matrix as a tool to measure the Taliban's advancement and convince USEK staff to prepare for NEO (exhibits 20, 21, 22). However, USEK staff showed little interest in planning for NEO (exhibits 15, 18, 20, 21, 22). Despite the Taliban's rapid advance towards Kabul, on 12 August USEK only planned to evacuate 250 personnel by 31 August (exhibit 21). On 14 August, the Ambassador committed to evacuating the Embassy, but his personnel were unprepared and had taken few steps to reduce their footprint or destroy sensitive equipment/information (exhibits 20, 21, 22, 146). USEK security forces and the USFOR-A FWD (TEXT REDACTED) evacuated the final personnel from the Embassy to HKIA at 0100 on 16 August. Most USEK personnel departed Afghanistan shortly thereafter (exhibits 15, 18, 20, 21, 22).

(b) At HKIA, USFOR-A FWD was responsible for up and out coordination. They communicated daily with various elements of the interagency, to include Department of State (DoS) and the White House. They also coordinated with partner nations seeking support with evacuation, and coordinated with the Turkish Military, the Taliban, and the NSU to establish and maintain security of the airfield (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Louisiana.

#### TRIBUTE TO KIM HOLDEN

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I rise today for two reasons: one happy, one not so happy.

First, I want to take a moment to recognize a much admired Louisiana journalist. I am referring to Ms. Kim Holden from the wonderful city of New Orleans in my State. Kim has just retired from WVUE, which we sometimes call FOX 8 News, in Louisiana, and Ms. Holden has been with FOX 8 News for 34 years.

Kim, if I may call her by her first name, is Louisiana through and through. She is what most of us would call a star-spangled professional. Ms. Holden graduated from St. Mary's Dominican High School. I know, to some of you, that doesn't mean much, but it is an extraordinarily good school in my State.

She started out at Tulane University. She wanted to study premed, but she realized pretty quickly that premed wasn't for her. She discovered her love for journalism, and she went to and graduated from Loyola University in New Orleans with a major in communications.

She took her first job in 1988 as an intern at WVUE FOX 8, and she never left. Kim's talent and intelligence was quickly recognized at FOX 8. She was hired almost immediately after being an intern as a part-time production assistant.

Throughout her 34 years at FOX 8, she has worked as a producer, as a reporter, as a weekend anchor, and as an assistant news director. In 2005, Ms. Holden started anchoring the morning

newscast, and she has coanchored at 5 and 10 p.m. for the last 12 years.

It is a very unique thing, as you know, Mr. President, in television to work your entire career in one place, particularly in your hometown. Most journalists move from city to city—not Kim. She loves New Orleans, and New Orleans loves her back.

I have been interviewed any number of times, with great admiration from Ms. Holden—not always with great joy because Kim is tough. She is tough as a boot as a journalist. She does her job, but she is very, very fair. She is in a world now of agenda journalists who have an agenda of their own—not Kim Holden. Not Kim Holden. She called the balls and the strikes. I don't even know what party she is in. I don't care which party she is in. She was just a pro.

Kim, as I said, has retired, and she has had an extraordinary career. When you go back and look at her awards, she has received an Emmy and two Edward R. Murrow Awards for reporting. The Associated Press named her Reporter of the Year twice.

Throughout her career at FOX 8 News, Kim has covered everything from the COVID-19 pandemic to hurricanes, including Hurricane Katrina, to the New Orleans Saints winning the Super Bowl.

I think, in her next chapter, Ms. Holden is going to spend some quality time—she deserves it—with her husband Bobby and her four children and her six grandchildren.

So I just wanted to recognize Kim Holden today and to thank her for giving so much to the profession of journalism and to thank her for giving so much to my State in Louisiana. And I wish her the best in her next chapter.

#### ENERGY

Mr. President, now on the less pleasant subject which I wish I didn't have to talk about—deeply, profoundly stupid; deeply, profoundly stupid—that is the only way that I know how to describe one of the worst decisions by an administration that has become famous for bad decisions. I am talking about President Biden's assault on sustainable, affordable energy.

The people of Louisiana know, and the people of America know that they are now paying \$90 to fill up their cars and tanks with gas because the Biden administration killed the Keystone Pipeline, canceled our offshore oil leases, and forfeited America's energy independence. We were energy independent. The Biden administration forfeited it.

What seems to be underappreciated, however, is how President Biden's agenda is driving up the price not just of oil but of all kinds of necessities that American and Louisiana families need every day. It is not just about oil and gas. It is about everything.

Not only do most goods get to our homes after riding in trucks and planes and cars and ships powered by gas or diesel, but a lot of our plastics and

other products, if you think about it, they are also made from petroleum. Actually, only 60 percent of oil in the world gets used as a fuel. Forty percent of the global oil supply ends up in other things, things other than cars and trucks—in products.

That means that it doesn't just cost people more to get to and from the store. It means almost everything in the store costs more because of its connection to oil. Some medicines come from oil. Microfiber comes from oil. Mascara comes from oil. Synthetic leather comes from oil.

Do you have a phone case or a handbag or a chair or a car made with plastic? That is oil. That is oil.

Now, not everything is made from oil. Some goods that you buy are not made from that natural resource. But I bet they are packaged in plastic. And all of these items, all of these household necessities are casualties of President Biden's assault on sustainable energy.

Here is a fat fact: Our economy can't run without fossil fuels. Now, I am not suggesting that fossil fuels should be our only source of energy. Certainly, we should take advantage of the efficiencies we can find in wind. I believe in wind and solar. I believe in solar—and nuclear and hydrogen and hydroelectric. But part of a sensible, sustainable, affordable energy plan has to include fossil fuels.

Ours is the greatest economy in all of human history. It can't run without energy, and 80 percent of our energy today comes from fossil fuels. That is just a fat fact.

The truth is that American ingenuity—and I am referring to fossil fuels—has made the most out of one of the most versatile resources that the world has ever known, but the Biden White House is determined to punish us for that innovation—just determined to punish us—by making every single part of the American dream more expensive. Even necessities that aren't directly made from petroleum depend on affordable fuel to reach American families.

Record high inflation and gas prices have sent Americans to food pantries. Why? Because even fruits and eggs and milk are becoming unaffordable. The latest reports show that many Americans are paying 8.6-percent higher prices today than they were last year. But we know it is more than that. I know those are the official government numbers, but we know it is more than that. Eggs are up 32 percent. Milk is up 16 percent. Flour is up 14 percent. Baby food—when you can find it—is up 13 percent. These aren't luxury items. These are staples that Americans depend on every single day.

I mean, why is a Louisiana man telling us “[m]y food budget is insane”? My food budget is insane. “[I]t's gone up \$100–150 a week. So, it's becoming more and more difficult, to buy the same thing I bought a year or two years ago.”

That is not just a Louisianian talking. That is all across America.

Why did a woman in Baton Rouge realize that fruits and vegetables—not sirloin steak, fruits, and vegetables—are breaking her bank? She is cooking more with rice and bread instead of fruits and vegetables. The high grocery prices for this lady are gutting her and her family like a fish. And that is just a fact—a very unhappy one, but it is a fact.

Now, high oil prices are also waterboarding our farmers, which contributes to these high food prices. Did you know that we make industrial fertilizer from fossil fuels? And when natural gas costs more, so does fertilizing a field of wheat or corn or soybeans. Some of our herbicides right now are twice as expensive as they were, if farmers can find them.

Tractors drink diesel. Duh. So do irrigation systems. A gallon of diesel—1 gallon—a year ago, you know what it was? It was \$3.23. You know what it is today? It is \$5.20.

Now, what does this mean for Louisiana rice farmers and other growers? For every extra dime farmers spend on a gallon of diesel—every extra dime—a grower will spend about \$4.50 more for an acre of rice, \$2.30 more for an acre of cotton, and an extra \$1.74 for an acre of corn.

Corn growers—I mentioned corn growers—they also depend on nitrogen fertilizer, which we make with methane. And then corn—I mentioned corn—corn goes into cereal. It goes into sweetened drinks, peanut butter, baby food, ketchup, salad dressing.

You know, I don't mean to be ugly, but this administration's energy policy is deeply, profoundly stupid. And it is dangerous.

So my people are feeling President Biden's gas hike from the gas pump to the grocery store, to the doctor's office.

A lot of the raw materials that make our medicines and healthcare products are made from—guess what—petroleum.

Oil goes into our burn creams. Do you ever burn yourself, have to go to the local grocery store or the local pharmacy, buy something to put on your burn? That cream comes from oil.

You have allergies? Those allergy pills are made, in part, with oil.

Do you ever get a cold, take a little NyQuil, take some cold tablets? You need oil to make them. Our kids' gummy vitamins are made with oil. The bandaids in your medicine cabinet, they are made from oil.

The President's assault on fossil fuels is hitting my people in Louisiana, and they are hitting the American people so hard they are coughing up bones. My people and the people of America are increasingly having to dip into their savings accounts just to afford everyday items, not to take a cruise, not to buy a new car, not to buy some new clothes to look good at church on Sunday—for household necessities.